| Home | New Testament Studies | Romans Table of Contents | Previous Section | Next Section |

ROMANS 13

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS[4]	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Obedience to Rules	Submit to Government	The Christian and the State	Duties Toward State Authorities	Submission to Civil Authority
13:1-7	13:1-7	13:1-7	13:1-5	13:1-7
			13:6-7	
Brotherly Love	Love Your Neighbor	Love Fulfills the Law	Duties Toward One Another	Love and War
13:8-10	13:8-10	13:8-10	13:8-10	13:8-10
The Approach of the Day of Christ	Put on Christ	The Imminence of Christ's Second Coming		Children of the Light
13:11-14	13:11-14	13:11-14	13:11-13	13:11-14
			13:14	

READING CYCLE THREE (see "Bible Interpretation Seminar")
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO ROMANS 13:1-7

A. Remember, Romans 12-15 is a literary unit with Rom. 12:1-2 being an introduction to the entire practical section. This was written specifically to the church in Rome; see the Introduction to Romans.

B. As Romans 12 dealt primarily with
   1. the Christian and fellow believers (Rom. 12:9-13)
   2. as well as the Christians and others in society (Rom. 12:14-21)
   3. Rom. 13:1-7 deals primarily with the Christian and the civil government

4. However, there is no contextual division between these subjects. Paul saw them as one. There is no sacred vs. secular dichotomy. All of life belongs to God. Believers are stewards in every area! The link between these two chapters may be seen in Rom. 12:18, "so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men"

SPECIAL TOPIC: HUMAN GOVERNMENT

C. Believers' understanding of the place of civil government has been varied.
1. In the OT government develops within the line of Cain (cf. Gen. 4:16-22).
2. The tower of Babel (cf. Genesis 11) is related to mankind's attempt at self rule apart from God.
3. The kingship within Israel was meant to be God's reign through divine law and through a designated under-shepherd (the King), but it was not successful because of mankind's sin.

Jesus' discussion of the proper place of government in Matt. 22:21 and Mark 12:17 is pivotal. It is surprising that Paul does not make mention of Jesus' words in this context (although Rom. 13:1-7 and 11 seem to parallel Matt. 22:15-22 and 39). There is a proper God-given role for government in a fallen world. Often the Apostles were forced into struggling with how to relate to authority, both civil and religious. It proves to be a positive and negative task depending on the actions of the human authority. Paul was both protected and persecuted by government. However, John, in the Revelation, speaks of government as the Great Whore (cf. Rev. 17)!

Believers must support government unless it
a. violates Scripture
b. violates our Spirit-led consciences
c. demands ultimate allegiance. Civil order is preferable to chaos (cf. 2 Thess. 2:6-7)

SPECIAL TOPIC: HUMAN GOVERNMENT

D. This same subject is dealt with in 1 Timothy 2:1; Titus 3:1 and 1 Peter 2:13-17.

E. Judaism was a legal religion under the Roman government of the first century. Christianity was considered a sect within it for many years (cf. Acts 18:12-16). This afforded legal protection to the missionary movement in these early years. One purpose of Acts was to show that Christianity was not a political threat to Rome. Rome provided international peace and stability (*pax Romana*) in which the gospel spread (cf. 1 Tim. 2:1-2).

F. This passage is intensified in the light of Paul's personal experiences with the authorities. It is also possible that this section was included because
1. of the tensions within the Roman church related to governmental edicts by Nero (e.g., restricting Jewish rituals). This may have caused some believing Jews to leave the capital (e.g., Aquila and Priscilla, cf. Acts 18:2). In their absence believing Gentile leadership developed.
2. of the tensions in Rome caused by the preaching of the gospel in the large Jewish community of Rome. The historian Suetonius, *Life of Claudius* 25.2, records that the Emperor exiled the Jews from the capital in A.D. 49 because of recurrent rioting caused by a "Chrestus" (i.e., Claudius' [A.D. 41-54] edict to stop all Jewish rituals in Rome; see full note at Acts 18:2, 3rd item). This may be a variant spelling in Latin of Christ (Christos).

G. There is no biblical form of government. There are guidelines for believers, in any and every form.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ROMANS 13:1-7

[1]Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. [2]Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. [3]For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; [4]for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. [5]Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. [6]For because of this you also pay taxes, for *rulers* are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. [7]Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

13:1 "Every person is to be in subjection" This could be either

1. a PRESENT PASSIVE IMPERATIVE meaning, "continue to be made submissive"
2. a PRESENT MIDDLE IMPERATIVE, "submit himself/herself" (cf. Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13). "Submit" was a military term used to describe a chain of command. Paul is addressing all believers. Paul asserts that believers should be subject to one another (cf. Eph. 5:21).

In our day submission seems like a negative term. It is a word that depicts both a humility and a profound understanding of God's world and our place in it. Jesus was said to be submissive to

1. His earthly parents (cf. Luke 2:51)
2. His heavenly Father (cf. 1 Cor. 15:28)
3. He is our guide in this area!

SPECIAL TOPIC: SUBMISSION

▣ **"to the governing authorities"** Although Paul used this word (*exousia*) in other contexts to refer to angelic powers, primarily demonic (cf. Rom. 8:38; Col. 1:16; 2:10,15; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:12), here the context demands "civil authorities" (cf. 1 Cor. 2:6,8; Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13). Remember, context not lexicons determine word meaning. The Bible seems to imply that there are angelic authorities behind human governments.

1. Daniel 10
2. the LXX of Deut. 32:8, "When the Most High divided the nations, when He separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the angels of God."
3. See Oscar Cullman, *Christ and Time* and Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christ and the Powers*.
4. But still governing authorities function under God (cf. Rom. 13:1b,4a, and 6).

SPECIAL TOPIC: AUTHORITY *(EXOUSIA)*

SPECIAL TOPIC: HUMAN GOVERNMENT

SPECIAL TOPIC: ANGELIC LEVELS IN PAUL'S WRITINGS

▣

NASB	**"those which exist are established by God"**
NKJV	**"that exist are appointed by God"**

NRSV	**"that have been instituted by God"**
TEV	**"have been put there by God"**
NJB	**"have been appointed by God"**
REB	**"the existing authorities are instituted by him"**
Peshitta	**"those who are in authority are ordained by God"**

This is a PERIPHRASTIC PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. This grammatical form asserts that God is behind all human authority (cf. John 19:11; Dan. 2:21; 4:17). This does not refer to "the divine right of Kings," but to the Divine will for order. This is not asserting a specific type of government, but government itself. Civil order is better than chaos (cf. Rom. 13:6).

13:2 "whoever resists authority" This is a PRESENT MIDDLE PARTICIPLE. This refers to a personal habitual rebellion against an established order, literally, "to set one's self in opposition" (cf. Acts 18:6; James 5:6). In Matt. 22:21; Mark 12:17; and Luke 20:25, Jesus set the boundaries for both government and church.

In Acts 5:25-32 we see what happens when authorities overstep their bounds.

▣ **"has opposed. . .have opposed"** This is a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE and a PERFECT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. These speak of a settled or established rebellion. God has provided for order in this fallen world (cf. Rom. 13:4,6). To oppose order is to oppose God, unless the civil authorities or religious authorities step beyond their God given bounds (see Contextual Insights, B.). The real spiritual issue is submission to authority. Fallen humanity wants autonomy!

▣ **"will receive condemnation to themselves"** The KJV translates "condemnation" as "damnation." This word has intensified its meaning in English since A.D. 1611. The NKJV translates it as "judgment." In context this could refer to

1. God's judgment
2. civil punishment (cf. Rom. 13:4)

These people bring judgment on themselves by their attitudes and actions against "authority."

SPECIAL TOPIC: AUTHORITY

13:3 See parallel comment in 1 Pet. 2:14.

▣ **"rulers"** See SPECIAL TOPIC: *ARCHĒ* and SPECIAL TOPIC: ANGELIC LEVELS IN PAUL'S WRITINGS

▣ **"authority"** See SPECIAL TOPIC: AUTHORITY (*EXOUSIA*)

13:4 "for it is a minister of God to you for good" The governmental authorities act against civil evil-doers whereas the believer is restricted in his personal retaliation (cf. Rom. 12:17-19). Martin Luther stated "God's way to control bad men is to put bad men in control."

▣ **"if"** This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which means possible future action.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GREEK GRAMMATICAL TERMS, VII

▣

NASB	**"for it does not bear the sword for nothing"**
NKJV	**"for he does not bear the sword in vain"**
NRSV	**"for the authority does not bear the sword in vain"**
TEV	**"their power to punish is real"**
NJB	**"it is not for nothing that the symbol of authority is the sword"**

REB "it is not for nothing that they hold the power of the sword"
Peshitta "for he is not girded with the sword in vain"

The word "sword" (*machaira*) refers to the small Roman sword used in capital punishment (cf. Acts 12:2; Rom. 8:35). This passage and Acts 25:11 give the New Testament basis for capital punishment, while Gen. 9:6 clearly states the Old Testament perspective. Fear is one effective deterrent to evil and chaos!

▣ **"for it is a minister of God, an avenger"** The term for avenger (*ekdikos*) is used several times in the LXX of the OT. It is even used in the first part of Lev. 19:18. In the OT if a person killed another person, even accidently, that person's family had the right to exercise the "eye-for-an-eye" vengeance (i.e., the blood avenger, cf. Deut. 19:4-13). Paul seems to be relating this OT custom to the authority of the civil government of his day.

In 1 Thess. 4:6 God is said to be the avenger, which follows Rom. 12:19. Both of these refer to Deut. 32:35 (cf. Heb. 10:30).

SPECIAL TOPIC: BLOOD AVENGER

13:5 "it is necessary to be in subjection" There are two reasons stated

1. to escape punishment, either God's or the governing civil authorities
2. for the believers' conscience

SPECIAL TOPIC: SUBMISSION

▣ **"for conscience sake"** There is not an OT counterpart to the Greek term "conscience" unless the Hebrew term "breast" implies a knowledge of self and its motives. Originally the Greek term "conscience" referred to consciousness related to the five senses. It came to be used of the inner senses (cf. Rom. 2:15). Paul uses this term twice in his trials in Acts (i.e., 23:1 and 24:16). It refers to his sense that he had not knowingly violated any known religious duties toward God (cf. 1 Cor. 4:4).

Conscience is the developing understanding of believers' motives and actions based on

1. a biblical worldview
2. the indwelling Spirit
3. a lifestyle knowledge based on the word of God

It is made possible by the personal reception of the gospel. Humans must be careful in this area because conscience can be damaged or molded by culture, training, and/or personal preferences.

SPECIAL TOPIC: CONSCIENCE

13:6 "because of this you also pay taxes" This is a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE, although in form it might be a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE (cf. JB). This is one example of a Christian's responsibility to civil authorities precisely because the government authorities are God's servants (cf. Rom. 13:1-2).

13:7
NASB "Render to all what is due them: tax...;custom...;fear...;honor"
NKJV "Render therefore to all their due; taxes...;customs...;fear...;honor"
NRSV "pay to all what is due them—taxes...;revenue...;respect...;honor"
TEV "Pay, then, what you owe them; pay them your personal and property taxes, and show respect and honor for them all"
NJB "Pay every government official what he has a right to ask—whether it be direct tax or indirect, fear or honor"

This could refer to two separate groups of civil authorities (cf. RSV), but probably what is meant is that Christians are to give both taxes and respect to civil authorities because they function as God's ministers (cf. Rom. 13:1,4 [twice],6; Matt. 22:15-22).

The two terms, "tax" and "custom" are used synonymously here (although TEV makes a distinction). If analyzed etymologically (the original root meaning), the first term referred to taxes paid by a conquered nation (cf. Luke 20:22) and the second term to personal taxes (cf. Matt.17:25; 22:17,19).

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO ROMANS 13:8-14

A. It is possible to understand Rom. 13:1-7 as a self-contained literary context. However, the subject of "owing" in Rom. 13:7 seems to be continued in a different sense in Rom. 13:8.
   1. believers owe an obligation to the state
   2. believers also owe an obligation to other human beings

B. Verses 8-10 are a unified thought, as are Rom. 13:11-14. They continue the discussion from Romans 12 of the Christian's responsibility to love others.

C. Paul's use of the OT Decalogue as a moral guide for New Covenant believers shows the continuing relevance of the OT in the area of godly living (sanctification), not salvation (justification, cf. Galatians 3). It seems that Paul has combined several sources to construct his ethical guidelines:
   1. the words of Jesus
   2. words from other Apostles
   3. the guidance of the Spirit
   4. the Old Testament
   5. his rabbinical training
   6. his knowledge of the Greek thinkers (especially the Stoics)

D. Verses 11-14 have an eschatological (end of time) orientation. The contrast of darkness and light was characteristic of Jewish literature, including the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is also common in the writings of John.

   "The already" versus "the not yet" tension of the Christian life is the stimulus for godly living. The "new age" (Kingdom of God) has been inaugurated and will soon be consummated. This passage is very similar to 1 Thess. 5:1-11.

   SPECIAL TOPIC: THIS AGE AND THE AGE TO COME

E. Verses 13-14 had a life-changing affect on Augustine in the summer of A.D. 386. He says, in his *Confessions* 8:29, "No further would I read, nor had I any need; instantly at the end of this sentence, a clear light flooded my heart and all the darkness of doubt vanished away."

   Wow! This book from God has the power to change the fallen human heart!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ROMANS 13:8-10

[8]Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled *the* law. [9]For this, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." [10]Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of *the* law.

13:8 "Owe nothing to anyone" This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE with a NEGATIVE PARTICLE which usually means stop an act already in process. This emphatic phrase has two NEGATIVES. This may have related to taxation issues (Rom. 13:6-7). Financial debt is always an emotional and potentially spiritual drain. Be careful of worldliness. It robs believers of their ability to support Christian causes and personal charity. However, this verse cannot be used as a proof text for "no consumer credit." The Bible must be interpreted in light of its own day. It is not an American morning newspaper!

Verses 8-10 are emphasizing the priority of our loving one another

1. as covenant brothers (Matt. 22:39-40; John 13:34-35)
2. as fellow human beings (cf. Matt. 5:42; Gal. 6:10)

The NIDNTT, vol. 1, p. 668, makes the observation that the VERB "owe" has two senses.

1. in the Gospels it is used of a debt
2. in Paul's Letters it is used of a responsibility
3. In this context Paul seems to combine these connotations.

▣ **"except to love one another"** This is the key thought of Rom. 13:8-10. It is the key thought of the NT (cf. John 13:34; 15:12; Rom. 12:10; 1 Cor. 13; Phil. 2:3-4; 1 Thess. 4:9; Heb. 13:1; 2 Pet. 1:7; 1 John 3:11; 4:7, 11-12).

▣ **"he who loves his neighbor"** This VERB is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE This does not refer to isolated or seasonal acts of love, but to a lifestyle of Christlike love.

The term "neighbor" is literally, "another of a different kind" (*heteros*), although the distinction between *heteros* and *allos* (another of the same kind) was breaking down in Koine Greek. In context this may refer to one's neighbor, in the widest possible terms, believer or unbeliever (cf. Luke 12:14-21; 10:25-37). However, the quote from Lev. 19:18 in context refers to another covenant partner (a fellow Israelite).

Christians should love other Christians as brothers and lost people as potential brothers (cf. Gal. 6:10). Christianity is a family. Each member lives and serves for the health and growth of the whole (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7).

SPECIAL TOPIC: BIBLICAL FAITH IS CORPORATE

▣

NASB, NKJV, NRSV, Peshitta	**"has fulfilled the Law"**
TEV	**"has obeyed the Law"**
NJB	**"have carried out your obligations"**
REB	**"has met every requirement of the law"**

This common Greek VERB (*pleroō*) can be translated in several ways. It is a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE, which can be translated as "it has been and continues to be fulfilled." Robert Hanna, *A Grammatical Aid to The Greek New Testament*, quotes A. T. Robertson and calls it "a gnomic perfect (referring to a customary truth, well known by the recipients)" (p. 28). It is repeated in Rom. 13:10 (cf. Gal. 5:14; 6:2).

13:9 It is not unusual for Paul to use the Mosaic Law (Exod. 20:13-17 or Deut. 5:17-21 and Lev. 19:18) to motivate New Covenant believers. In Eph. 6:2-3, Paul also used one of the Ten Commandments as a motivation for Christians (cf. 1 Tim. 1:9-10). This OT text was not a means of salvation (cf. Galatians 3; the OT still junctions in sanctification but not justification), but it was still God's revealed will for how humans should treat God and each other (cf. Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:6,11). Possibly quoting from the OT was Paul's way of relating to both Jewish and Gentile believers in the Roman Church.

This use of the term "fulfilled" also relates to Jesus' discussion of the Law in Matt. 5:17. In one sense, the Law has passed away, but in another it is still very helpful.

It is possible that this is referring to law in general, law as societal norms, and not the Mosaic Law specifically (cf. JB). However, the fact that Paul quotes from the OT in Rom. 13:9 implies a reference to the Mosaic Law. Notice that only love, not human rule-keeping, can truly fulfill the Law!

Leviticus 19:18 is used in two significant ways.

1. Jesus uses it in conjunction with the *shema* (i.e., Deut. 6:4-6) as a summary of the whole Law (cf. Matt. 22:37-40; Mark 12:29-31; Luke 10:27).
2. For Paul it functions as a summary of the second half of the decalog (i.e., one's relationship with covenant partners (cf. Gal. 5:14), following Jesus' comment in Matt. 7:12 and Luke 6:31.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL'S VIEWS OF THE MOSAIC LAW

SPECIAL TOPIC: MURDER

SPECIAL TOPIC: ADULTERY

SPECIAL TOPIC: STEALING

SPECIAL TOPIC: COVETING

SPECIAL TOPIC: NOTES ON EXODUS 20

▣ **"For this"** This Is a reference to the Ten Commandments or the Decalog. The order of this listing of the second half of the Ten Commandments follows the Greek uncial manuscript B, called Vaticanus. It is slightly different from the Masoretic Hebrew Text of Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. The second half of the Decalog dealt with Israel's relationship to each other based on their relationship to YHWH.

▣ **"and if there is any other commandment"** This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. There are other commandments. The phrase meant "if there are any other commandments outside the Decalog." In other words, this sums up all the Mosaic Law or possibly "law" in general.

There is a variant in the Greek manuscript traditions as to how many and in what order these Ten Commandments are listed. Judaism has one numbering; Catholics and Protestants also have different numbering. The meaning of the passage is not affected by this variation, which is true of the vast majority of the manuscript variations.

▣ **"it is summed up in this saying"** This is a quote from Lev. 19:18. It was quoted several times in the Gospels (cf. Matt. 5:43; 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31 and Luke 10:27). Jesus calls it the second greatest or foremost commandment. It is also quoted in Gal. 5:14 and James 2:8. When one loves God then one will love what God loves (i.e., human beings made in His image, cf. Gen. 1:26-27).

▣ **"YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF"** Believers must love themselves as God loves them before they can love and accept others. Appropriate self love is not evil. The major truth of this section is stated clearly-love others (cf. Rom. 13:10). Those who have been touched by God's self-giving, sacrificial love will love others in the same way (cf. 1 John 3:16). This is the crux of Christlikeness (the restored image of God.) In the presence of this kind of love there is no need for "law."

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ROMANS 13:11-14

[11]*Do* this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. [12]The night is almost gone, and the

day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. [13]Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. [14]But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to *its* lusts.

13:11

NASB	**"*do* this"**
NKJV	**"and *do* this"**
NRSV	**"Besides this"**
TEV	**"You must do this"**
NJB	**"Besides"**
REB	**"always remember"**
Peshitta	**"know this also"**

This is a literary way of linking what follows (Rom. 13:11-14) with what precedes (Rom. 13:9-10). Be doers of the word, not just hearers (cf. James 1:22,23,25)! Love must be put into action.

SPECIAL TOPIC: *SHEMA*

▣ **"knowing the time"** This is a PERFECT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. This term for time (*kairos*) was used in the sense of a special period of time (cf. Eph. 5:16), not regular chronological time (*chronos*). Believers must live in

1. the light of the any-moment return of Christ
2. the new age has already dawned

SPECIAL TOPIC: THIS AGE AND THE AGE TO COME

▣ **"that it is already the hour"** This imagery, "the hour" (used often in John's Gospel), refers to a special moment (similar to *kairos*) in God's redemptive plan (cf. Rom. 3:26; 1 Cor. 7:29; 10:11; James 5:8; 1 Pet. 4:7; 2 Pet. 3:9-13; 1 John 2:18; Rev. 1:3; 22:10). It is used both

1. of the times of Jesus' crucifixion
2. the times of His return

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HOUR

SPECIAL TOPIC: TERMS FOR THE SECOND COMING

▣ **"sleep"** This term is used here as imagery for moral and spiritual laxity (cf. Eph. 5:8-14; 1 Thess. 5:6). Words only have meaning in a specific context. Be careful of a fixed definition. All words have several possible meanings (semantical field).

The semanitcal field of biblical words can be found

1. by comparing different translations, especially those from different theological theories
   a. W. E. Vines, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*
   b. Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*
2. for advanced study please look at
   a. Colin Brown (ed.), *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 5 volumes
   b. William A. Van Gemersen (ed.), *Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 5 volumes
3. for the basic procedures for a biblical word study see my Seminar on "Biblical Interpretation" online (first red box on homepage, X, C.)

▣ **"for now salvation is nearer"** Salvation is an initial decision and a process. Salvation will not be complete until believers have their new bodies (cf. 1 John 3:2; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Heb. 9:28; 1 Pet. 1:5). Theologically this is called "glorification" (Rom. 8:30). It is the hope of every generation of Christians to expect the Lord back in his or her lifetime (cf. Luke 21:28). Paul was no exception (cf. 1 Thess. 4:15).

SPECIAL TOPIC: GREEK VERB TENSES USED FOR SALVATION

SPECIAL TOPIC: A DELAYED SECOND COMING

▣ **"than when we believed"** Christianity begins with an aha-moment of repentance and faith (instantaneous justification and sanctification), but must result in a godly lifestyle (progressive sanctification) and ends in Christlikeness (glorification). One must accept God's offer in Christ (cf. John 1:12; 3:16; Rom. 10:9-13). This initial decision is not the end, but the beginning!

SPECIAL TOPIC: SANCTIFICATION

SPECIAL TOPIC: FAITH, BELIEVE, OR TRUST

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO "RECEIVE," "BELIEVE," "CONFESS/PROFESS," AND "CALL UPON"?

13:12 "The night is almost gone" This refers to the present evil age which is already being destroyed and replaced (cf. 1 Cor. 7:29-31; 10:11; James 5:8; Eph. 5:8,14; 1 John 4:7; 2 John 2:17-18; Rev. 1:3; 22:10). Paul, and especially John, use the contrast between dark and light, as did the Dead Sea Scrolls.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THIS AGE AND THE AGE TO COME

▣ **"the day is at hand"** This is a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE. These are the last days (cf. Phil. 4:5; James 5:9). We have been in the last days since Jesus' incarnation. They will last until His glorious return. All believers since the first century are surprised by such a long delay in Christ's return. However, the new age has dawned in Christ.

The following note on the nearness of Christ's return is taken from the "Crucial Introduction" to my commentary on Revelation. See it online at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

> "**SIXTH TENSION** (imminent return of Christ vs. the delayed *Parousia*)
>
> Most believers have been taught that Jesus is coming soon, suddenly, and unexpectedly (cf. Matt. 10:23; 24:27,34,44; Mark 9:1; 13:30). But every expectant generation of believers so far has been wrong! The soonness (immediacy) of Jesus' return is a powerful promised hope of every generation, but a reality to only one (and that one a persecuted one). Believers must live as if He were coming tomorrow, but plan and implement the Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:19-20) if He tarries.
>
> Some passages in the Gospels (cf. Mark 13:10; Luke 17:2; 18:8) and I and 2 Thessalonians are based on a delayed Second Coming (*Parousia*). There are some historical events that must happen first:
>
> 1. world-wide evangelization (cf. Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:10)
> 2. the revelation of "the man of Sin" (cf. Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2; Rev. 13)
> 3. the great persecution (cf. Matt. 24:21,24; Rev. 13)
>
> There is a purposeful ambiguity (cf. Matt. 24:42-51; Mark 13:32-36)! Live everyday as if it were your last but plan and train for future ministry!"

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE LAST DAYS

▣ **"lay aside. . .put on"** These are AORIST MIDDLE SUBJUNCTIVES, which give a note of contingency. The implication is "you yourselves lay aside. . .put on once for all or decisively."

Both God and mankind are active in both justification (repentance and faith) and sanctification (godly living). This clothing imagery is very common in Paul's writings. He may have gotten this imagery from Isa. 52:1; 61:10; Zech. 3:1-5.

Believers are to take off their sleeping clothes and put on their battle array (cf. Eph. 4:22-25; Col. 3:10,12,14). We are Christian soldiers preparing for the daily spiritual battle (cf. Rom. 7:7-25; Eph. 6:10-18). See note in NIDNTT, vol. 1, pp. 315-316.

▣ **"the armor of light"** This is probably an allusion to Isa. 59:17 (i.e., YHWH as the Divine Warrior). Believers must decisively put on the armor and weapons of righteousness (cf. 2 Cor. 6:7; 10:4; Eph. 6: 11,13; 1 Thess. 5:8). God's armor is available to believers but they must

1. recognize their need
2. recognize God's provision
3. personally and intentionally implement it into their daily thought and life

There is a daily spiritual battle (cf. Rom. 7:7-25; Eph. 6:10-19)! See Clinton F. Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions About Spiritual Warfare*.

13:13 "Let us behave properly" This is an AORIST ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE, literally "walk." This was a Hebrew idiom for lifestyle (cf. Eph. 4:1,17; 5:2,15). Paul uses it over 33 times.

The list of sins in this verse are made up of three pairs of two terms. The terms have some semantic overlap. It is possible they are meant to be synonyms (i.e., used for literary effect).

These terms may relate to the tension between believing Jews and Gentiles in the Roman church. The new Gentile believers may have been continuing

1. some of their immoral pagan worship practices
2. acting arrogantly against the returning believing Jewish leaders who had left briefly because of Nero's edict which banned all Jewish rites in Rome

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE PATH, THE WAY

SPECIAL TOPIC: VICES AND VIRTUES

▣ **"not in carousing and drunkenness"** This referred to sexual immorality which was linked in pagan religious rituals to drunkenness. In the list of the sins of the flesh in Gal. 5:21, these terms are also listed side by side.

SPECIAL TOPIC: WINE AND STRONG DRINK

▣ **"not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality"** This pair seems to overlap the first pair. The second term is used extensively in the NT (cf. Mark 7:22; 2 Cor. 12:21; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 4:19; 1 Pet. 4:3; 2 Pet. 2:7). If the first pair focuses on drunkenness, this pair focuses on sexual immorality, even a socially uncontrolled abandonment to sensuality.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HUMAN SEXUALITY

▣ **"not in strife and jealousy"** These terms speak of strife between people (cf. Gal. 5:20). This may have been the result of the inappropriate conduct of the first two pairs. If these are addressed to Christians (cf. 1 Cor. 3:3; Col 3:8), they reflect some of the pagan religious practices which must stop in believers' lives. However, in context this verse is a contrast to believers, so in that sense, it would be a warning.

13:14 "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" This imagery relates to the royal robe of King Jesus now placed on the shoulders of believers (i.e., here, positional sanctification; cf. Zech. 3:1-5). Some scholars see it as an allusion to baptismal clothing. This clothing imagery is first mentioned in Rom. 13:12. It is a way of showing believers' new position in Christ. It also emphasized the fact that believers must implement their new lifestyle choices (progressive sanctification) because of their new position in Christ (cf. Eph. 4:22,24; Col. 3:8). In Gal. 3:27 this truth is expressed as a

statement of fact, INDICATIVE; here it is expressed as an IMPERATIVE (AORIST MIDDLE), a command.

This tension between the INDICATIVE statement and the IMPERATIVE is the tension between our position in Christ and our striving to possess that position (see SPECIAL TOPIC: SANCTIFICATION). We are "saints" (holy ones) at the moment of salvation, but we are admonished to be "holy" (i.e., Matt. 5:48) This is the biblical paradox of a full and free salvation in Christ and cost-everything Christlikeness!

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHRIST JESUS AS LORD

▣ **"make no provision"** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE. This grammatical form usually means to stop an act already in process. This seems to imply that some Christians in Rome were living inappropriate immoral lives. This may have been a carry over from their pagan worship practices (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13).

It is difficult to explain the NT teachings about carnal Christianity. The NT authors present mankind's condition in black and white terms. A carnal Christian is a contradiction in terms. Yet it is a reality of our "already" but "not yet" lives. Paul categorized humanity into three groups (1 Cor. 2:14-3:1):

1. natural men (lost humanity), Rom. 2:14
2. spiritual men (saved humanity), Rom. 3:1
3. men of flesh (carnal Christians or baby Christians), Rom. 3:1

▣ **"the flesh in regard to *its* lusts"** Paul knew all too well the continuing dangers of our fallen Adamic nature (cf. Rom. 7; Eph. 2:3), but Jesus gives us the power and desire to live for God (cf. Romans 6). It is an ongoing struggle (cf. Rom. 8:5-7; 1 John 3:6-9).

SPECIAL TOPIC: FLESH (*SARX*)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why was Paul's statement about government so radical to the early Christians?
2. Should Christians be submissive to every form of government?
3. Should Christians be submissive to every legal requirement of government?
4. Does verse 1 teach the divine right of kings?
5. Is Paul breaking new ground theologically or is there a precedent in Jesus' words in Matt. 22:21?
6. Is civil disobedience ever justified for Christians (cf. Acts 5:25-32)?
7. How does verse 4 relate to the issue of capital punishment?
8. Is the Christian's conscience always right (cf. Rom. 13:5)?
9. Based on verse 8, should believers not have credit cards?
10. Does verse 8 speak of our love to other Christians or to all people?
11. Why does Paul use the Decalog as an incentive to New Testament believers?
12. Why would Paul list such terrible sins in connection with believers?
13. How does one "put on the Lord Jesus Christ?"

Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International